OF THE

CHARACTERS of WOMEN:

AN

EPISTLE

To a LADY.

By Mr. *POPE.*

LONDON,

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Advertiſement.

THE Author being very ſenſible how particular a Tenderneſs is due to the FEMALE SEX, *and at the ſame time how little they generally ſhow to each other; declares, upon his Honour, that* no one Character *is drawn from the Life, in this Epiſtle. It would otherwiſe be moſt improperly inſcrib'd to a Lady, who, of all the Women he knows, is the laſt that would be entertain'd at the Expence of Another.*

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To a LADY.

NOTHING ſo true as what you once let fall,
Moſt Women have no Characters at all.
Matter too ſoft a laſting Mark to bear,
And beſt diſtinguiſh'd by black, brown, or fair.
How many Pictures of one Nymph we view,
All how unlike each other, all how true!

Arcadia's Counteſs, here, in ermin'd pride,
There, *Paſtorella* by a Fountain ſide:
Here *Fannia* leering on her own good man,
And there a naked *Leda* with a Swan.
Let then the Fair-one beautifully cry
In *Magdalen*'s looſe hair and lifted eye,
Or dreſt in ſmiles of ſweet *Cecilia* ſhine,
With ſimp'ring Angels, Palms, and Harps divine;
Whether the Charmer ſinner it, or ſaint it,
When Polly grows romantic, we muſt paint it.

Come then, the Colours and the Ground prepare!
Dip in the Rainbow, trick her off in Air,
Chuſe a firm Cloud before it falls, and in it
Catch, ere ſhe change, the *Cynthia* of this minute.

Rufa, whoſe eye quick-glancing o'er the *Park*,
Attracts each light gay Meteor of a Spark,
Agrees as ill with *Rufa* ſtudying *Locke*,
As *Flavia*'s diamonds with her dirty ſmock,
Or *Flavia*'s ſelf in glue (her riſing task)
And iſſuing flagrant to an evening Mask:

So morning Inſects that in Muck begun,
Shine, buzz, and fly-blow, in the ſetting-ſun.

How ſoft is *Silia*! fearful to offend,
The frail one's Advocate, and weak one's Friend;
To her, *Caliſta* prov'd her Conduct nice,
And good *Simplicius* asks of her Advice.
Sudden, ſhe ſtorms! ſhe raves! You tip the wink,
But ſpare your cenſure; *Silia* does not drink.
All Eyes may ſee from what the change aroſe,
All eyes may ſee — a Pimple on her noſe.

Papillia, wedded to her am'rous Spark,
Sighs for the Shades — "How charming is a *Park*!
A *Park* is purchas'd, but the Fair he ſees
All bath'd in tears — Oh odious, odious *Trees*!

Ladies like variegated Tulips ſhow,
'Tis to their Changes half their Charms we owe;
Such happy Spots the nice Admirer take,
Fine by defect, and delicately weak.
'Twas thus *Calypſo* once our hearts alarm'd,
Aw'd without Virtue, without Beauty charm'd;

Her Tongne bewitch'd as odly as her Eyes,
Leſs Wit than Mimic, more a Wit than wiſe:
Strange Graces ſtill, and ſtranger Flights ſhe had,
Was juſt not ugly, and was juſt not mad;
Yet ne'er ſo ſure our paſſion to create,
As when ſhe touch'd the brink of all we hate.
Narciſſa's nature, tolerably mild,
To make a Waſh would hardly ſtew a Child;
Has ev'n been prov'd to grant a Lover's pray'r,
And paid a Tradeſman once to make him ſtare;
Gave alms at *Eaſter*, in a chriſtian trim,
And made a Widow happy, for a whim.
Why then declare Good-nature is her ſcorn,
When 'tis by that alone ſhe can be born?
Why pique all mortals, yet affect a name?
A Fool to Pleaſure, yet a Slave to Fame!
Now deep in *Taylor* and the Book of *Martyrs*,
Now drinking Citron with his Grace and *Ch*** :
Now Conſcience chills her, and now Paſſion burns,
And Atheiſm and Religion take their turns;

A very Heathen in the carnal part,
Yet ſtill a ſad, good Chriſtian at her heart.
Flavia's a Wit, has too much ſenſe to *pray*,
To *toaſt* our wants and wiſhes, is her way;
Nor asks of *God* but of her *Stars* to give
The mighty bleſſing, "while we live, to live."
Then all for Death, that Opiate of the Soul!
Lucretia's Daggar, *Roſamunda*'s Bowl.
Say, what can cauſe ſuch impotence of mind?
A Spark too fickle, or a Spouſe too kind.
Wife Wretch! of Pleaſures too refin'd to pleaſe,
With too much Spirit to be e'er at Eaſe,
With too much Quickneſs ever to be taught,
With too much Thinking to have common Thought:
You purchaſe Pain with all that Joy can give,
And die of nothing but a Rage to live.
Turn then from Wits; and look on *Simo*'s Mate,
No Aſs ſo meek, no Aſs ſo obſtinate:
Or her, that owns her Faults, but never mends
Becauſe ſhe's honeſt, and the beſt of Friends:

Or her, whoſe Life the Church and Scandal ſhare,
For ever in a Paſſion, or a Pray'r:
Or who in ſweet Viciſſitude appears
Of Mirth and Opium, Ratafie and Tears,
The daily Anodyne, and nightly Draught,
To kill thoſe Foes to Fair ones, Time and Thought.
Woman and Fool are *two* hard Things to hit,
For true No-meaning puzzles more than Wit.

Pictures like theſe, (dear Madam) to deſign,
Asks no firm hand, and no unerring line;
Some wandring Touches, ſome reflected Light,
Some flying Stroke, alone can hit them right:
For how ſhould equal Colours do the knack,
Camelions who can paint in White and black?

In publick Stations Men ſometimes are ſhown,
A Woman's ſeen in private Life alone:
Our bolder Talents in full view diſplay'd,
Your Virtues open faireſt in the Shade.
Bred to diſguiſe, in Publick 'tis you hide;
Where none diſtinguiſh 'twixt your *Shame* and *Pride*,

Weakneſs or *Delicacy*; all ſo nice,
Each is a ſort of *Virtue* and of *Vice*.

In ſev'ral Men we ſev'ral Paſſions find,
In Women, two almoſt divide the Kind,
Thoſe only fix'd, they firſt or laſt obey;
The Love of Pleaſures, and the Love of Sway.

That, Nature gives; and where the Leſſon taught
Is but to pleaſe, can Pleaſure ſeem a Fault?
Experience, This; by Man's Oppreſſion curſt,
They ſeek the ſecond not to loſe the firſt.

Men, ſome to Buſineſs, ſome to Pleaſure take,
But every Woman is, at heart, a Rake:
Men, ſome to Quiet, ſome to publick Striſe,
But every Lady would be Queen for life.

Yet mark the Fate of a whole Sex of Queens!
Pow'r all their end, but Beauty all the means.
In Youth they conquer with ſo wild a rage,
As leaves them ſcarce a Subject in their Age:
For foreign Glory, foreign Joy they roam;
No thought of Peace or Happineſs at home.

But Wiſdom's Triumph is well-tim'd Retreat,
As hard a Science to the Fair as Great!
Beauties like Tyrants, old and friendleſs grown,
Yet hate Repoſe, and dread to be Alone,
Worn out in publick, weary ev'ry eye,
Nor leave one ſigh behind them when they die.
Pleaſure's the Sex, as Children Birds, purſue,
Still out of reach, yet never out of view,
Sure, if they catch, to ſpoil the Toy at moſt,
To covet flying, and regrete when loſt:
At laſt, to Follies Youth could ſcarce defend
It grows their Age's prudence to pretend;
Aſham'd to own they gave delight before,
Reduc'd to feign it, when they give no more.
As Hags hold *Sabbaths*, leſs for joy than ſpight,
So theſe their merry, miſerable Night;
Still round and round the Ghoſts of Beauty glide,
And haunt the Places where their Honour dy'd.
See how the World its Veterans rewards!
A Youth of Frolicks, an old Age of Cards,

Fair

Fair to no purpoſe, artful to no end,
Young without Lovers, old without a Friend,
A Fop their Paſſion, but their Prize a Sot,
Alive, ridiculous, and dead, forgot!

Ah Friend! to dazzle let the Vain deſign,
To raiſe the Thought and touch the Heart, be thine!
That Charm ſhall grow, while what fatigues the Ring
Flaunts and goes down, an unreguarded thing.
So when the Sun's broad beam has tir'd the ſight,
All mild aſcends the Moon's more ſober light,
Serene in Virgin Modeſty ſhe ſhines,
And unobſerv'd the glaring Orb declines.

Oh bleſt with *Temper!* whoſe unclouded ray
Can make to morrow chearful as to day;
That pleas'd can ſee a younger charm, or hear
Sighs for a Siſter with unwounded ear;
That ne'er ſhall anſwer till a Husband cool,
Or, if you rule him, never ſhow you rule;
Pleaſe by receiving, by ſubmitting ſway,
Yet have your humour moſt, when you obey;

Let Fops or Fortune fly which way they will;
Deſpiſe all loſs of Tickets or Codille;
Spleen, Vapors, or Small-pox, above them all,
And Miſtreſs of yourſelf, tho' China fall.

And yet believe me, good as well as ill,
Woman's at beſt a Contradiction ſtill.
Heav'n, when it ſtrives to poliſh all it can
Its laſt, beſt work, but forms a *ſofter Man*;
Picks from each Sex, to make the Fav'rite bleſt,
Your love of Pleaſure, our deſire of Reſt,
Blends, in exception to all gen'ral rules,
Your Taſte of Follies, with our Scorn of Fools,
Reſerve with Frankneſs, Art with Truth ally'd,
Courage with Softneſs, Modeſty with Pride,
Fix'd Principles, with Fancy ever new;
Shakes all together, and produces — *You*.

Ev'n ſuch is Woman's Fame: With this un-bleſt,
Toaſts live a ſcorn, and Queens may die a jeſt.
This *Phœbus* promis'd, I forget the Year,
When thoſe blue eyes firſt open'd on the Sphere;

Aſcen-

Aſcendant *Phœbus* watch'd that hour with care,
Averted half your Parents ſimple Pray'r,
And gave you *Beauty*, but deny'd the *Pelf*
That buys your Sex a Tyrant o'er itſelf:
That gen'rous God, who Wit and Gold refines,
And ripens Spirits as he ripens Mines,
Kept Droſs for Dutcheſſes, the world ſhall know it,
To you gave Senſe, Good-humour, and a Poet.